

WASHINGTON, D.C. , Today, Congressman John W. Olver (D-1st District) strongly criticized the Administration's request to cut the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program.

"The president's request would deal a massive blow to community development efforts throughout the country," Olver said.

Olver leveled the charge during a hearing today of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Community Development.

Olver, the Ranking Member (most senior Democrat) of the subcommittee, also grilled HUD Secretary Alvaro Sosa.

CDBG is one of the oldest HUD programs. Begun in 1974, it provides annual formula grants to communities across the country.

"The irony is that the same Administration that wants to cut CDBG has requested billions in additional funding for disaster relief," Olver said.

In addition, the cut to CDBG would have a significant impact locally. Massachusetts received a total of \$1.2 billion in CDBG funds last year.

The Administration also proposes eliminating and consolidating several separate HUD programs into a single "disaster relief" program.

Olver said, "The proposal to eliminate these programs is unthinkable. If the president thinks that he can't afford to fund these programs, he should at least fund them at the current level."

Olver also expressed serious concern regarding HUD's response to Hurricane Katrina, which displaced more than 1 million people.

"We are seven months removed from this disaster and I believe that HUD does not have a plan for how to deal with the long-term needs of the victims," Olver said.

Olver cited the Disaster Voucher Program, which was designed to assist families in the Gulf region who were displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

In the December supplemental bill, \$390 million was provided for the Disaster Voucher Program. The program is supposed to be a temporary measure.

"It is more than curious to me that the number of families being served is so low, when the amount of people in need is so high," Olver said.

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